



**Presentation to Law Amendments Committee on Bill 57 with a focus on solid waste and plastics**

**1 November, 2021**

Chair, Committee Members thank you for this opportunity to present.

I have been a fan of this Act since it was introduced in 2007. I believe it has made a material difference to the quality of our environment, the quality of our lives, and even the strength of our economy. Putting targets with deadlines in an Act makes a lot of sense. It's what we do when something is important. Another strength of the Act is that it tackles many issues and it attempts to integrate environment and economy. If we don't change our economy, we will not succeed in overcoming the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, the plastic crisis....

Perhaps the best thing about this Act is the level of all party support for this Act. All the parties that have been in power have advanced it, and when in opposition, they have continued to support it, only calling for it to be strengthened. I don't know if there is a similar precedent like this across Canada.

Bill 57 continues this spirit and practice. I applaud its breadth of goals and its attempt to integrate environment, economy and equity. It is good to see the concept of two-eyed seeing embedded in the Act. Etuaptmumk, combining Indigenous knowledge and science, is an integrative concept itself. I am glad to hear Albert Marshall will be presenting. It is also good to see training, and labour, business brought into the Act.

Before I focus on section 15 of the Act. I want to leave you with an idea. You may have heard about the MaRS (Medical and Research Science) Centre for Impact Investing in Toronto. MaRS has been highly successful in sparking research, innovation and investment. What about a similar centre here in Nova Scotia focused on the environment. I would be happy to elaborate at another time.

I presume many of the specific comments you're hearing are about increasing ambition and sharpening language. Mine will be along these lines.

I am going to focus on section 15, solid waste, specifically plastics.

The only goal in the Act that is the same as the 2007 goal is solid waste. It was 300 kilograms/per person/per year in 2007 and it is 300 kilograms in Bill 57. Now maybe it

should be lower than 300 kg, but my main concern is that with the current timelines in the Act we will not meet this goal again in 2030, 23 years later.

Currently, our waste per person per year is 420 kg. Even at that number we are lower than some other provinces but that is primarily because we don't have the manufacturing that provinces like Quebec and Ontario have.

The main reason we have been stuck at over 400 kg is because the provincial government—at the leadership level—has been consulting, talking, planning, negotiating and not doing for the last decade or more. There were consultations and reports produced in 2011 and 2015 but little action followed.

Bill 57 proposes a deadline for a plan for 2023, up to 2 years plus from today. 2 years for a plan and only plan.

I think if you canvassed most stakeholders including industry and municipalities, you would find the appetite for another round of broad consultations to be low, to put it mildly.

**Recommendation:**

Replace 15 c) in Bill 57 with language adopting or endorsing the 2015 report entitled 'What we Heard'.

<https://novascotia.ca/nse/waste/docs/Solid-Waste-What-We-Heard-Report-March-2015.pdf>

One of the main recommendations to come out of the 2011 and 2015 consultations is extended producer responsibility. We have it one form or another for a number of items in this province already including electronics, tires and product stewardship for pop bottles. There has also been consistent support for disposal bans on items that shouldn't go into landfills and instead be recycled or composted.

I wholeheartedly support 15a) and the inclusion and expansion of EPR.

The Government has been sitting on Extended Producer Responsibility for printed paper and packaging, most of which is plastic, since 2015. This inaction, despite high levels of support from Nova Scotians, municipalities, the recycling sector and many businesses and concerted efforts by municipalities and Divert NS to address any lingering concerns. Divert NS released a report written by Dr. Avalon Diggle and Dr. Tony Walker in 2021.

<https://divertns.ca/research-reports>

**Recommendation:**

The Government should move forward with EPR for PPP right away. This doesn't have to be in Bill 57.

As with many issues an intelligent approach can create new economic opportunities this is particularly true with waste where recycling, reuse and even reduction can boost the local economy. New Brunswick has already moved forward on EPR for PPP. We should look at regional collaboration on solid waste including on reduction and recycling.

**Recommendation:**

Add a clause supporting a regional (Atlantic Canadian) economy for waste reduction and recycling.

There is also the opportunity for the Government to lead on waste reduction and recycling through government procurement.

**Recommendation:**

Government will reduce waste and increase recycling through government procurement.

I want to end with plastics. Nova Scotians are using more plastics. Plastic is now the number one item in your blue bin. It is the number one litter item. This is partly because plastic is a versatile item but it is also because the oil industry is hoping demand for plastic will make up for declining demand for oil in other sectors.

Think of a plastic item in the environment as an oil or toxic spill in slow motion. As you've likely heard micro-plastics are making their way into our food, particularly seafood, our soil, water and even the air we breathe. We have every reason to reduce our use of plastic and recycle what we do use. This is a form of pollution that we, as Nova Scotians, have a lot of control over. If we throw a Tim Horton's cup out the window, that plastic pollution is likely to remain in Nova Scotia forever. Perhaps a superficial point, but if our beaches and roadsides are littered with plastic it undermines our effort to be a green destination or leader.

The Federal Government, along with the provinces, municipalities and First Nations, has responsibility for plastics. I encourage the Government to work with and support the Federal Government in its efforts to address plastic pollution.



The number one thing the province can do to reduce plastic use and pollution is to bring in EPR or product stewardship for as many plastic items as possible from mattresses, textiles to coffee cups as well as ban single use plastics. One year ago, the Government banned plastic bags. From what I can determine this has been a success.

In closing I urge the Government to greatly accelerate and up the action on waste. If we wait until 2023 for a plan we will not meet the goal of 300 kilograms/per person/per year in the Act. Thank you.